Radio Days – 2013-10-12

Tip of the Week – Know Your Details

Last week we talked about keeping your mobile phone or table safe when using the internet. Two clients this week had similar problems: they both had a lapse in memory so we spent more time fixing the problem than was needed.

Lost Password

During the recent thunderstorms in Maryborough one client lost his modem because it had been damaged by lightning. The only solution was to buy a new ADSL modem and replace the old one so that he could get onto the internet again. This was important for his business so we went full speed ahead.

Unfortunately this meant that he could not remember the username and password for his internet connection. For most ISPs, these are the same ones used to access your emails, but in his case his email program was working and we could not find the password. The only way that we could get the password was to ring his ISP and ask them. This was easily done because this particular ISP just texts your password to a mobile phone so the tech support person does not get access to your password.

As an aside, it is often cheaper to use a good UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply) or surge protector to protect your computer and modem against surges caused by lightning strikes. This particular lightning strike must have been caused by a surge coming down the phone line because nothing else was damaged, as you would expect if the surge had been down the power line.

Lost Phone Line

A second client was transferring from dialup internet access to ADSL. This was possible because there was a new repeater installed on her phone line less than a kilometre from her home office. Previously, because her office was over ten kilometres from the exchange, the only accessible internet options were dialup (slow), wireless over the telephone network (expensive) or satellite (unreliable because of her location near hills and water).

She had arranged with her ISP to convert her dialup line to ADSL. This needed a device inserted into the repeater and a new ADSL modem. The new modem duly arrived so I went there to install the modem and ensure that everything was working.

The instructions which came with the new modem were baffling to my client but, as I had done this sort of installation before, I could understand them. One of the problems faced by so many people is that the people who write instructions for computer users to follow are, far too often, experts in their field who cannot make allowances for people whose knowledge and experience is much less than theirs. This means that, for many people, the instructions are completely opaque and impossible to follow.

The first step, as detailed in the instructions, was to connect the modem to both the power and to the telephone. The telephone fittings in my client's office were the old ones but the modem and its cables were designed for the new, smaller, RJ15 phone connector. Off to the shops we went to get the connectors and lines needed to get the modem working.

All cables and connectors installed, it was time to connect to modem to her ISP as directed. This was when the problems started. The only solution was to ring the ISP and we got on to a very helpful tech person. After checking all the settings he asked what number we were connected to, and my client gave her fax number. This was wrong: she had asked for the ADSL line to be connected to her phone line so that she could cancel the fax line as she received so few faxes.

A quick change to connect the modem to the correct phone line and all worked as planned.

Physician, Heal Thyself!

This is a story about my problem during the week. I had thought that I had set my second disc to be the disc for temporary (working) files and for the Windows' swap file but it hadn't worked so I set everything up to use the disc which I had decided to use for these purposes.

What Are These For?

The Swap File

Windows needs its own work area. There is a special file which Windows uses for that: it is called the *swap file*. Normally the swap file is stored on your C: drive but you can change its location quite easily. I had changed its location to a partition on the second physical disc so that my computer would be as fast as possible.

Windows reported that there was not enough room on this disc so I made it bigger by changing the size of the partitions. This took about sixteen hours, mostly overnight.

Working Files

All programs need their own working space. This space is also usually on the C: drive in two folders called *Temp* and *Tmp*. I am not sure just why there are two names and two folders, but this is how things work. It is easy to combine these and place them in the same folder.

I created a new folder called *Temp* and placed it on the partition which also housed the swap file.

What Happened?

Then Photoshop (not Photoshop Elements, but the professional version) would not start. It gave a message which I cannot now remember. To resolve the problem (because Photoshop had worked before and I was not sure what was going on) I uninstalled it then reinstalled it.

This made no difference.

I then used Google to check the message. It turned out that many other people had found the same problem. The solution, after quite a lot of reading between the lines, was easy: make my swap partition bigger. This took another sixteen hours, again mostly overnight.

This, too, made no difference.

I changed the location of the swap file and the temporary files back to the C: drive (which had plenty of space available) and everything worked beautifully. Again, this took sixteen hours!

It turns out that Photoshop had unusually high needs for temporary space, especially when dealing with large images. Some of my images are over 200 GB in size and Photoshop's need for working space exceeded the space that I was allocating on my disc. Everything is now back to normal and working. The internet does come in handy for all sorts of things!

Further Information

Nothing this week.